

REMARKS BY THE HONORABLE JOHN E. FOGARTY, SECOND DISTRICT
RHODE ISLAND IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, APRIL 2, 1950

Mr. SPEAKER. The most frightening social problem facing this country at the present time is the rising incidence of narcotic drug habits among the young schoolchildren of both sexes as reported in so many large cities. As a rule, both school officials and the police find themselves without means to check the growth of this evil and face an impossibility in their attempts to eradicate it. There is reason to believe that the spread of this most horrible of vices, believed by some medical authorities to be incurable, is being deliberately fostered for purposes of profit.

The Federal Narcotics Bureau has reported that illegal traffic in narcotics has advanced at such a stepped-up rate that peddlers have even stooped to giving teen agers free "shots" to start them on the road to addiction. The United States Public Health Service Hospital at Lexington, Kentucky reported last November that in the first 10 months of 1950 it had received 203 addicts under the age of 20 years as compared to 13 in 1948. The Lexington Hospital is the only public one convenient to the larger centers of drug addiction and is indicative of the trend now existing.

One of the worst aspects of the problem is that the drug habit leads very quickly and almost inevitably into crime. The craving for the drug soon surpasses the possibility of satisfying it, and thus the girls resort to prostitution and the boys to various forms of crime, including robbery and holdups, in order to secure money with which to procure additional supplies. Or of equal gravity they become purveyors of the drug and are used as the means of

A perusal of newspapers from most cities in this country shows that the problem is just about universal in scope. Attempts have been made and are continuing to be made to combat this vicious evil but with little permanent effect. A major enforcement hitch is that narcotics laws carry light sentences. Persons convicted of narcotics offenses are fined relatively small amounts of money and if imprisoned are sentenced for short periods of time. In this respect the penalty for conviction is certainly not a deterrent to continuing violation and court records indicate that probation is often granted the violator which permits him to carry on his filthy operations.

It has been proved that in those areas where a realistic approach to the problem has been made through heavy fines and long terms of imprisonment, violations have amazingly decreased. Apparently the only language which these villainous and foul traders in human misery understand is fear of actual, effective punishment.

With this thought in mind, I have today submitted a bill to amend the penalty provisions applicable to persons convicted of violating the narcotic laws. This bill would provide heavy mandatory fines and compulsory minimum sentences greatly in excess of those authorized in the present law. A mandatory life imprisonment is called for upon conclusive evidence that the offense in the third conviction of the offender.

While this may seem to be quite drastic it still does not actually make the punishment fit the crime. Those of us who have had the misfortune to have seen, at first hand, the ravages of dope addiction well realize this. There could be no punishment which would adequately

compensate for the human suffering and misery caused by this affliction worse than death itself.

I am convinced that if this bill should be enacted into law it will check and greatly reduce the present widespread violations of the Narcotics Laws. It will certainly give our enforcement officials an effective and much needed weapon with which to combat that vicious and fiendish industry.

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